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ABSTRACT

Test takers' preferences for group versus individual administration of the Micro-TOWER System of Vocational Evaluation are reported. The system was administered to 211 clients at a vocational rehabilitation center, and consisted of work samples measuring the following job skills: record checking, filing, lamp assembly, message-taking, zip coding, making change, want ads comprehension, and payroll computation. Because the Micro-TOWER is administered to groups of two to ten people, the test developers were interested in whether or not this method of testing generated negative reactions that might interfere with test performance. It was found that the clients taking this test preferred group to individual testing at the rate of approximately two to one. This ratio was consistent and independent of the individual evaluator administering the test, the nature of the work sample, and the group size. There was, however, a slight tendency for increasing preference for group testing as the size of the group increased. The authors suggest that group testing provides these advantages: the clients encounter a supportive atmosphere; the evaluator has more opportunities to help the test takers who need assistance; and this means of testing is more appropriate for current employment situations in which a large number of people must be served. (GDC)

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Backman, M.E., Loeding, D. & Lewis, L.R. Clients' preferences for small groups vs. individual testing. Unpublished, Research Unit, New York, ICD Rehabilitation & Research Center, March 1975.

Introduction

Among the unique features of the Micro-TOWER evaluation system, not least is administering work samples to clients in small groups rather than individually. Because the small group approach has been seldom tried in the field with work samples, it was not clear how clients would react to this new kind of testing situation. Although limited resources have prevented a thorough study of this topic, effort was made to get some data on the simple question of clients' preferences for individual vs. group testing. It seemed important, at the very least, to seek some assurance that the group method was liked by clients -- some assurance, that is, that the new testing approach was not generating negative reactions that would possibly interfere with test performance.

Method

The data to be presented were collected during the initial stages of the development of the Micro-TOWER system, the stages when the details of the test administration procedures were being tested out and revised. At the end of each group administration of a work sample, the clients were given a simple form to check which read as follows:

> Would you rather take a work sample by yourself like you do in TOWER, or would you rather take a work sample in a group like you just did?
>
> ___ by myself, like TOWER
> ___ with a group of people

211 of these forms were collected from 34 different testings. Table 1 lists the number of clients present at each testing for each of the different work samples administered. Group size, it will be noted, ranged from 2 to 10 with groups of size 5 and 9 being particularly frequent.

Table 1 about here

In 7 of the 211 forms, clients failed to answer the question. In 19 other cases, the client indicated no preference for group or individual testing. These 26 forms (7 and 19) were excluded from further analysis. Also, because many clients had been present at more than one testing, it was necessary to randomly select only one form from the set of forms of each client who had been present at more than one work sample administration. This resulted in the exclusion of 96 additional forms, leaving a final total of 89 to be analysed. Thus, in the final sample each form had been filled out by a different client. Clients who had filled out more than one form checked all forms the same way in the great majority of cases.

Results

Table 2 presents clients' preferences for individual vs. group testing, breaking the data down in terms of the number of clients present at test administration.

Table 2 about here

There is a very slight tendency for preference for group administration to increase as the size of the group tested increases, but the trend was far from statistical significance. Even if testing in a larger sample indicated that the effect suggested here is a real one, it would very likely be of negligible importance since the rate of increase here is so small.

These data were also broken down in terms of the different work samples administered and in terms of the four different evaluators (2 male, 2 female) who were in charge of the various administrations. These exhausitive searches failed to turn up any suggestive differential patterns other than the one mentioned in the preceeding paragraph.

Thus the main finding here is that clients tend to prefer group to individual testing at a rate of about 2 to 1, this ratio being remarkably consistent and independent of the evaluator giving the test, the nature of the work sample administered and the size of the group being tested. The difference between the frequencies of 30 clients preferring work samples in an individual setting to 59 preferring work samples in a group setting was tested against the null hypothesis that clients would be equally likely to choose the individual testing as group testing. The difference was found to be highly significant ($p<.005$, two-tailed test).

Discussion

The main significant finding of this study further supports the Micro-TOWER group testing approach. The possibility does exist that clients may claim to prefer group testing to individual testing following a group testing session because it would seem to be the more socially desirable response under the circumstances. On the other hand, the clients in this study were concurrently being evaluated in both types of situation in the same building with much more time being spent in individual evaluation. Hence, it could be argued that the response set, if any, would likely have been in the other direction. Future research might collect preferential data on forms administered at the end of individual testing sessions to rule out this unlikely but possible explanation of the present result.

In any event, the present client population is well suited for this research problem since they really have an immediate basis on which to compare the two testing approaches.

Another question that might be raised is whether it would be advisable to work for higher preference rate than the one that has emerged. Although about 2 out of 3 clients prefer group testing, 1 out of 3 seems not to like the group situation. Future research might also examine in greater detail the reasons for this disliking. However, in the final analysis it seems probable that there will always be some fairly sizeable minority of clients who characterologically will prefer to do it alone. Does the Micro-TOWER system discriminate against these? If the negative reactions of these clients were really strong, there might be some cause for concern here; however, to date there has not been a single case of marked aversion to the situation.

In today's crowded world most employment situations involve having to interact with more than a few people. Those clients who may find a group situation somewhat difficult can benefit from group testins, since opportunity is provided to the evaluator to observe and then give counsel on difficulties as they arise. In some cases the individual testing situation may be more supportive for the client. However, the Micro-TOWER small group approach has its supportive aspects while at the same time providing a testing environment which is closer to the reality of today's business world.

TABLE 1

SIZES OF GROUPS FOR EACH WORK SAMPLE ADMINISTRATION

Work sample administered	Number of clients for each administration	Number of administrations
Record Checking	6/5/2/6/10	5
Filing	5/5/5/5/4	5
Lamp Assembly	4/4	2
Message-Taking	7/6/9/4/9	5
Zip Coding	5/9	2
Making Change	4/9/9	3
Want Ads Comp.	8/10/5/5/9/5/5	7
Payroll Comp.	6/3/9/5/9	5
		34

TABLE 2

FREQUENCY OF CLIENTS' PREFERENCES FOR
INDIVIDUAL VS. GROUP TESTING

Number of clients in group	Number of clients preferring individual testing	Number of clients preferring group testing	Total number
2, 3, or 4	5 (36%)	9 (64%)	14 (100%)
5, 6, or 7	13 (35%)	24 (65%)	37 (100%)
8, 9, or 10	12 (32%)	26 (68%)	38 (100%)
Totals:	30 (34%)	59 (66%)	89 (100%)